

## Bolivia

La Bandera de Bolivia



**Currency:** Peso

**Literacy Rate:** 81%

**Exports:** Tin, natural gas, Zinc, silver

**Official language:** Spanish

**Other languages:** Quechua and Aymará

**Major religion:** Roman Catholic

**Capital:** La Paz y Sucre

**Area:** 1,098,580 sq miles

**Population:** 7.8 million

**Ethnic Divisions:** 30% Quechua  
28% Mestizo  
25% Aymará Indian  
10% European

**Important Cities:** La Paz, Sucre, Cochabamba

### Geographic Regions:

West: The Altiplano: high, dry cold, and dry, mountain-rimmed

Central: the yungas (valleys)

East and Northeast: the llanos, wet, hot, forested lowlands

**Major Lake:** Lake Titícala

### Important or Famous Figures:

Simón Bolívar  
Antonio Joé de Sucre

**Most Famous Peak:** Mount Illimani

# Bolivia

The native civilization of the Aymará were conquered in the 1400's by the Incan armies. The Incas introduced the Quechua language which is still spoken today. The Spanish began their conquest in 1532 and by 1538 present-day Bolivia was under total control of the Spanish. After a 16 year war, the area gained independence on August 6, 1825, and was named after its liberator, Simón Bolívar.

For decades, Bolivia experienced revolutions and military dictatorships. It lost much of its territory in wars with Chile, Brazil, and Paraguay. In the War of the Pacific, Bolivia lost access to the sea, dooming its economy from a loss of trade. Peru later gave access to the Ilo port in southern Peru. Bolivia expected to improve its economy. Various military coups destabilized the country, but terrible economic conditions under the military proved that their rule was not effective.

## THE PEOPLE

### Population

Bolivia has a population of 7.9 million. About half the people live in urban areas. About 70% is composed of Native Americans, including Quechua (30%) , Aymará (25%) , Guaraní , Mojeño, Chimane, and smaller groups. About 25% of the people are criollo (mixed indigenous and European). Another 5% are of European descent.

## RELIGION

Approximately 95% are Roman Catholic. There are also Protestant and indigenous varieties. Bolivians of the altiplano also mix Aymaran and Quechua religions. Pachamama, goddess Mother Earth and Achachila, god of the mountains are two such popular gods.

## PERSONAL APPEARANCE

Urban residents generally wear Western-style clothing. Many women wear a pollera (a full, colorful skirt). Rural women wear a pollera with a manta(shawl). They may wear hats , and often you can tell where someone is from by the hat. Women often wear their hair in braids.

Some indigenous people make clothing from wool. Common colors are red, black, and off-white. Native men might wear pants that are shin-length, a shirt and a thick belt of leather. They often wear a poncho and a hat. Native women wear a long, dark-colored dress tied at the waist with a colorful belt. They may also wear a small shoulder cape and oval hat. Women use a woven cloth to carry their babies on their backs.

## LA GASTRONOMIA

Potatoes, rice, soups, milk products, and fruits are common staples in the Bolivian diet. Bolivia prepares potatoes in many ways. Chuños are freeze -dried potatoes used in soups or side dishes when rehydrated. Most foods are freeze dried and seasoned with spicy salsa. For meat, they mostly eat chicken. In cities, people enjoy (meat or chicken pies with potatoes, olives, and raisins) as a mid-morning snack